

American elected to lead a city in United States history. And it can be told by the countless number of immigrants whom he helped achieve the American dream.

My deepest condolences to his family, community, and Sikh Americans everywhere.●

REMEMBERING CARMEN RAMIREZ

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to celebrate the life of Carmen Ramirez, a relentless advocate for Oxnard, CA; a champion for the environment; and a dear friend to so many.

Born in Oklahoma—but a true daughter of California—Carmen grew up in the community of Pico Rivera in Los Angeles County. She attended the University of San Francisco and California State University, Los Angeles, before graduating from Loyola Law School.

Her passion for improving the lives of others eventually brought her to Oxnard. Beginning in 1978, Carmen served as a legal aid attorney working to represent low-income Californians of La Colonia. Among her many legal and professional accomplishments, she later served as president of the Ventura County Bar, president of the Women Lawyers of Ventura County, a trustee for The Colleges of Law for Santa Barbara and Ventura, a member of the board of governors for the California State Bar, and a member of the executive committee of the California Bench Bar.

But what drew Carmen into public service was her passion for the environment. In 2007, she joined the fight to oppose a liquefied natural gas project proposed near the beaches of Oxnard, and she fought successfully to protect her community. She would go on to become a staunch advocate in our fight against the climate crisis and to promote renewable energy, always leading with kindness, compassion, and composure.

She was elected to the Oxnard City Council for 10 years, where she served for 8 years as Mayor pro tem, promoting the causes of social and environmental justice. She went on to serve as the first Latina on the Ventura County Board of Supervisors in 2020.

Carmen cared deeply about her community. And in turn, her community cared deeply about her. Just ask one of the hundreds of Californians who crowded Plaza Park to pay tribute at her vigil. Remembered that day in tearful embraces, cutting through the sounds of the mariachi, and echoed in shouts of “Viva Carmen Ramirez!” we can see the lasting memory she leaves behind.

While she was taken too soon from family, friends, and her community, we will always have the example she set—defined by moral leadership and a fundamental care for others—to follow.

“Viva Carmen Ramirez.”

Oxnard, Ventura County, and all of California mourns her loss.●

TRIBUTE TO BISHOP CHARLES E. BLAKE, SR.

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Bishop Charles E. Blake, Sr., on a lifetime of service to his community and a career of caring for others.

Bishop Blake has served as pastor of the West Angeles Church of God in Christ for 53 years—53 years as a pillar of Crenshaw and South Los Angeles.

While it may be hard to believe, there was a time before the name Blake was synonymous with Crenshaw. Charles E. Blake, Sr., was born in Little Rock, AR, into a family of faith. His father was a preacher and well-respected leader in the Pentecostal faith. Both Charles and his brother, J.A., would go on to preach in the Church of God in Christ.

After his family moved to California and notably after his first sermon at the age of 16, he attended California Western University and subsequently earned his master's degree at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. It was there—as student body president, surrounded by Black students and faculty, and as a leader of student civil rights marches in Selma and Montgomery—where he began to see the strength of Black community power.

In 1969, he became senior pastor of West Angeles Church, where his powerful sermons from a pulpit in South Los Angeles grew his congregation rapidly and brought together the community. By 1999, what had once been a 300-person church on 5th Avenue and Adams Boulevard had grown to require the construction of the ornate, 5,000-seat West Angeles Cathedral.

Bishop Blake's unwavering faith and exalted message of devotion earned his election as presiding bishop of the Church of God in Christ four times, representing millions of worshippers around the globe. It also led to his appointment by President Obama to the Inaugural Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

But to countless families in South Los Angeles, whether attending a Sunday service or watching the Crenshaw corridor grow around them, his commitment to his community is what is most memorable. Over his decades of leadership, he brought to Crenshaw affordable housing, a performing arts theater, and a K-12 school; encouraged economic growth and businesses that provided jobs to Angelenos; created programs to lift up Black men with educational and financial literacy resources; and secured invaluable attention and resources for neighborhoods in South Los Angeles.

He invested in the Crenshaw corridor when it needed it most, and we thank him for his faith and service.

All of California wishes him and his wife, Lady Mae L. Blake, well in retire-

ment, and we wish his son, Charles E. Blake II, luck in his new role as senior pastor.●

TRIBUTE TO FATHER GREGORY JOSEPH BOYLE, S.J.

● Mr. PADILLA. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Father Greg Boyle on 50 years of service as a Jesuit priest and as a compassionate leader for families in East Los Angeles.

For over three decades, Father Boyle has served as founder and director of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. Based in Los Angeles, Homeboy provides an off-ramp for thousands of former gang members and at-risk youth.

Born in Los Angeles in 1954, Father Boyle first joined the Society of Jesus in 1972. After being ordained as a priest in 1984, he went on to serve Dolores Mission Church in Boyle Heights, where he saw the severity of poverty and violence in Los Angeles that condemned generations of Angelenos to hardship, incarceration, and—all too often—the loss of loved ones.

But he didn't shy from the dangers before him or ignore a community in need of care. Guided by the tenets of his faith—of nonviolence, of love, of care for others—he brought together his parish and community leaders to found what would later become Homeboy Industries. At its start, the organization focused on providing educational resources and employment services.

It would soon grow into a haven for hope for thousands of people in East Los Angeles, throughout the region, and beyond. Through Homeboy Bakery, Homeboy Diner, Homeboy Merchandise, and more, hundreds of people find job training and a reason to get up and get better each and every day. And once inside their doors, surrounded by people who have been through similar challenges, Angelenos are provided support for substance abuse, mental health services, and legal and educational resources.

Each month, Homeboy Industries also provides free tattoo removal services for nearly a thousand Californians to remove gang-related tattoos, removing a common barrier to finding work, and providing safety from visible signs of gang affiliation.

Father Boyle has lived his faith through action. Over five decades of service, he has believed in the goodness inherent in each of us. He has had the compassion to give second chances when others wouldn't. And for those who needed a little light, true to his Jesuit mission, he has the persistence to “go forth and set the work aflame.”

In the “lethal absence of hope,” as he describes it, Father Boyle has brought love, understanding, and a bright future to thousands of Angelenos, and we are grateful for his service.●

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARAB COMMUNITY CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SERVICES

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services located in the heart of Dearborn, MI. Created in 1971 out of a storefront on the impoverished south end of Dearborn, ACCESS has been engaging and building a community to empower individuals, families, and community members ever since. What began with a modest, volunteer-run effort to support the growing immigrant population has blossomed into the largest Arab American community nonprofit in the United States. ACCESS has been integral in assisting the growing Arab population as they adapt to life in the United States. By uplifting and advocating for real and meaningful change, they have become committed to safeguarding the engagement of Arab Americans throughout Michigan.

Fittingly, the mission of ACCESS is "To empower communities to improve their health and their economic, social, and cultural well-being." Spread throughout metro Detroit, ACCESS has 10 locations that provide more than 120 different programs/services to the community; they provide educational opportunities for youth including the Arab American Youth Leadership course, in which they support and foster the identity of the Arab American youth, as well as their 21st Century Community Learning Centers, which provide academic support during the school year and enrichment in the summer. Children are exposed to topics that focus on their identity and culture, as well as help build their advocacy, leadership, and civic engagement skills through youth empowerment to encourage community involvement.

In addition to youth services, ACCESS also offers a large variety of services to adults, especially recent immigrants. ACCESS provides subsidized immigration services to the community, as well as many free services addressing the community's basic needs, such as tax assistance, legal services, and assistance with public benefits programs. They also provide life skills training to settling families via their Center for Working Families, including financial coaching, workforce development, and skill-building. Most profoundly, ACCESS provides affordable healthcare through two community health and research centers—a fully integrated community health "one-stop service center" that is comprised of medical, public health and research programs, as well as mental and behavioral health programs.

While mainly focused on direct assistance to individuals, ACCESS also works to preserve the Arab American history and cultural identity through national programs such as the National Network for Arab American Communities, the Center for Arab American Philanthropy, and most notably, the

Arab American National Museum, founded in 2005; the museum is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute and is the Nation's only cultural institution devoted solely to document, preserve, and present the history, culture, and contributions of Arab Americans.

ACCESS has impacted countless lives throughout the course of 50 years. I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing ACCESS for their tireless advocacy and support of the Arab American community, both in Michigan and nationwide. I wish ACCESS continued growth and prosperity in the years ahead.●

120TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ROYAL OAK WOMEN'S CLUB

• Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the 120th anniversary of the Royal Oak Women's Club. For over 120 years, the Royal Oak Women's Club—ROWC—members have come together for the purpose of society and service within the Royal Oak community.

On the evening of November 8, 1902, 14 local Royal Oak women gathered together in the parlor of Mrs. Frances Lathrup Martin, for the purpose of creating a study club. It was Mrs. Martin herself that became the first president of the newly formed club. At the time of its founding, the club's mission included the expansion of opportunities for local women, pursuit of issues such as pediatric health and safety, and the promotion of general well-being within the Royal Oak community.

Over the years, as the ROWC expanded its presence in the area by joining larger regional organizations such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs—GFWC—the Michigan Federation of Women's Clubs—GFWC MI—Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs, and the Oakland County Federation of Women's Clubs. The club also transformed to become increasingly civic-minded, with efforts including local advocacy campaigns that resulted in better safety and sanitary equipment within Royal Oak's local public schools.

One-hundred and twenty years later the club has continued to expand and evolve, and now boasts a membership of over 120 persons, who dedicate their time toward the pursuit of community projects that promote good citizenship, civism, and quality education. The ROWC continues to hold a place of high esteem and local importance to the city, with many community groups and organizations using group's clubhouse as a location to hold meetings and events. The clubhouse itself holds significance, for both club and community. The structure, purchased by the ROWC in the 1920s, was even then one of the oldest buildings in the city. Originally a Baptist church constructed in 1839, the building has been relocated and restored as necessary for its preservation and continued use, but continues to exhibit many original fea-

tures. Upkeep of this structure, which was designated in 1979 as a Michigan Registered Historical Site, 1999 a Royal Oak Historic District, and is known today as the city's oldest building, remains among the club member's highest charges.

The Royal Oak Women's club continues to make a difference today through their philanthropic efforts, as well as by providing the women of Royal Oak with a space they may gather, exchange ideas and knowledge, and pursue the "high ideals" envisioned by the club's original members. Their efforts to support the community continue as well; the club provides financial support to the neonatal unit at Beaumont Hospital, the Royal Oak Library, Haven of Oakland County, the Boys and Girls Club for Southeast Michigan, and the South Oakland Shelter to name just a few of their initiatives. Members of the ROWC also volunteer their time to support the annual Royal Oak Community Awards banquet, the community service luncheon, and the annual Salvation Army Toy Luncheon, in addition to supporting the all-night graduation parties for the three local high schools.

The Royal Oak Women's Club has been an integral part of the Royal Oak community and the overall community of southeast Michigan for more than 120 years. As a Michigander and a resident of Oakland County, I am honored to ask my colleagues in joining me in celebrating this significant milestone for the Royal Oak Women's Club, its members, and the entire city of Royal Oak. I wish the Royal Oak Women's Club continued growth and prosperity in the years ahead.●

REMEMBERING ADA MARKITA FISHER

• Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to remember a friend and a great North Carolinian, Ada Markita Fisher, who unexpectedly died on October 7, 2022. Ada was 74 years old and only a few weeks away from her 75th birthday.

As a young African-American woman, she was a trailblazer. After completing a degree in biology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro—UNCG—she went on to become the first Black female to earn a medical degree at the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health. She was also the first Black UNCG alumna to complete a medical degree. Additionally, she completed her masters in public health at Johns Hopkins University's School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1981.

After completing her medical degree, Ada chose to return to North Carolina to provide medical care to an underserved community and lead programs for victims of substance abuse. She spent some of her career in the private sector, but most of her life was dedicated to helping people who were struggling and ultimately making a positive difference in her community.